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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a workshop designed to help participants to: (1) acquire an understanding and appreciation for the volunteer within the Orthodox Christian Church; (2) to learn about the Orthodox spirit of stewardship; and (3) to understand one's leadership as an extension of one's personal Orthodox Christian faith. The workshop is divided into four parts: (1) Orthodox Christian leadership; (2) Orthodox Christian stewardship; (3) the volunteer; and (4) the conclusion. Among the activities conducted in this workshop are an exploration of several New Testament texts for the notion of stewardship for Orthodox Christians and a description of various studies that have been made about volunteerism. (DB)

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LEADERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP AND THE VOLUNTEER:

A WORKSHOP

by

James Steve Counelis

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1 Corinthians 12:1
1 Corinthians 14:18

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

School of Education

LEADERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP AND THE VOLUNTEER:

A WORKSHOP

by

James Steve Counelis

The Philoptochos Diocesan Conference,
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> Tell them that they are to be good, and be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share.
>
> ---I Timothy 6:28

LEADERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP AND THE VOLUNTEER:

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James Steve Counelis[+]

Workshop Goals

Workshops come in all shapes and sizes. But, one thing they should not be. Workshops should not be a totally passive experience. Workshops are short term educational opportunities through which goals direct their design. For this workshop on "Leadership, Stewardship and the Volunteer," the goals are three: (1) to acquire an understanding and appreciation for the volunteer within the Orthodox Church; (2) to learn about the Orthodox spirit of stewardship; (3) to understand one's leadership as an extension of one's personal Orthodox Christian faith.

This workshop will have four parts. The first will be an overview of the workshop. The second will be on one's leadership in the Church. The third will be to explore several New Testament texts for the notion of stewardship for Orthodox Christians. The fourth part will be a description of the volunteer and the most effective service which each volunteer can offer.

Workshops are not intended to be detailed courses. They are intended to present comprehensive overviews of the topic with some opportunity to explore ideas and practices with fellow workshop members and the workshop leader. This brief workshop booklet is designed for the participant to write his/her notes, to ask questions which need answering, and to take something home from this workshop for personal reference and review.

Part One: Orthodox Christian Leadership

There are two topics under this heading: (a) leadership; (b) the Orthodox Christian practice of leadership.

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The social and behavioral scientists who have studied "leadership" have found it to be a difficult though not an impossible task. The Ohio State University Leadership Studies of the 1950s produced some important findings in the study of aircraft commanders and their crews. Two factors were found that separated good and inadequate aircraft commanders. These two factors were: (a) Initiating structure in interaction; (b) Consideration.

The factor "initiating structure in interaction" meant that the aircraft commander planned, organized, set into motion, directed and supervised the air crews, thereby achieving their group goals, The factor "consideration" meant that the aircraft commander exhibited watchful care and concern for the welfare of his men.

LEADERSHIP GRID

		Consideration	
		High	Low
Initiating Structure in Interaction	High		
	Low		

With a pencil, number the above boxes in rank order 1-4 from the "best" (1) aircraft commander to the "worst" (4) aircraft commander.

The purpose of this exercise is to more than suggest that good leadership requires the leader to plan, organize, direct and supervise his/her operation while being considerate of those who are his/her colleagues.

The Orthodox Christian leader--clergy or lay--exhibits the virtues of generosity, truthfulness, gratitude, kindness, honesty, cooperation, helpfulness, and goal-directedness. The Orthodox Christian leader--clergy and lay--

utilizes group decision-making processes, thereby recognizing the inherent equality, dignity, and integrity of each communicant as the image of God, regardless of gender and age. The effect of group decision-making is to develop group solidarity for their project and its goal while recognizing that no one person is all-knowing, except for God.

Regardless of status, those clergy and lay leaders who behave arbitrarily and exhibit little respect for democratic processes and their consequences do not reflect the image of God in which they were made. Nor do they thereby practice the evangelic ethic of Christ our Redeemer. Arbitrary behavior is demeaning, morally corrupting and it must be resisted, individually and collectively, with love and patience.

When an Orthodox Christian leader--clergy and lay--realizes his/her error or is brought up short by others observing that error (publicly or privately) then the Orthodox Christian leader personally acknowledges his/her error, apologizes when appropriate, rectifies what can be rectified, and moves on to other business. The adage "To err is human, to forgive is divine." applies here.

The Orthodox Christian leader should never behave as if his/her leadership is a mere extension of personal ego. Further, the ministry of the Church and the Orthodox Christian should never be corrupted by any institution or activity that becomes an end itself. Rather, the Orthodox Christian leader must always see to it that the religious and moral ministry of the Church and her communicants are at the forefront of the group's endeavors. The means and the ends of every church endeavor must be simultaneously religious and moral.

For some Orthodox Christian leaders--clergy and lay--governance means total personal control over their members as if they were robots. Such aspirations and attempts to achieve total personal control over church members are immoral. They depreciate the entire Royal Priesthood of Christ, both clergy and lay. The dignity and the integrity of every person--man, woman and child--as God's image are violated.

Further, total personal control, by nature, is impossible. Each person is n-dimensional and can never be in the total control of another. Nor can a group of n-dimensional persons be totally controlled by another, unless they want to be so controlled and permit it to happen to them. The illusion of total control is harbored by immoral leaders because they do not recognize the erosion of their personal leadership. Nor do immoral leaders see the withdrawal of workers from their organizational service to be uncommon. The self-sufficient autonomous leader is an illusion. That illusion is the failing of a good many business, political and church leaders, across the spectrum of business, politics and churches.

The wise Orthodox Christian leader--clergy and lay--recognizes this human fact, namely, that human beings are God's creation for His purposes and not for the personal agenda of any church leader. The wise Orthodox Christian leader--clergy and lay--seeks to include the church's communicants in govern-

ance and other service rather than excluding them. Influence rather than control is achievable when freedom of participation is practiced while governance comes to mean inclusion of the governed.

The Orthodox Christian leader--clergy and lay--teaches by example. If he or she is a worthy model to emulate, then the learning is positive. If the model is seriously flawed, the negative learning can become a caution to the learner. Moreover, the true leader of the Church teaches explicitly the evangelic ethic and promotes the rearing of the young to assume leadership and become stewards of the Church.

Part Two: Orthodox Christian Stewardship

The workshop members will divide themselves into groups. One person will be elected from among the members to lead the discussions and one member will serve as a note taker. The note taker will report to the whole group.

The members of this workshop are to read aloud and discuss together the following: I Corinthians, chapters 12-13. The questions given below can be used to help the discussion along.

STUDY QUESTIONS	NOTES
(1) What is the source of one's talents or abilities?	
(2) Does being a member of the Church bring responsibility to the members of the Church? If so, why? If not why not?	
(3) As a possessor of talent and training, are these personal possessions? If so, why? If not, why not?	

(4) There is a diversity of roles given in this letter of Paul. What meaning do these have for him and us?

(5) Does the ministry of one's personal gifts of talent and training need motivation and reason? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

(6) How are faith, hope and love related to one's stewardship--Paul's idea of the ministry of God's gifts to each person?

(7) Is the volunteer a steward of the the Church? Is not, why not? If so, why?

(8) Define stewardship for yourself.

Part Three: The Volunteer

A computer search for empirical studies on volunteers and volunteerism produced some 56 studies out of a possible set of 298. Therefore 18.8% were empirical. The dates of these studies range from 1984 to the present. These studies have valuable ideas which may help the Philoptochos of this diocese. Four are outlired here.

Study No. 1: Remembering that Philoptochos is a religiously inspired organization of the American Orthodox Church, the membership is predominantly Orthodox Christian women. However, the degree of religious commitment for Orthodox Christian women will vary considerably. This fact is substantiated by everyone's experience as well as the results a study of college students.

Though volunteering may be generally regarded as a religious value, it is also true that volunteer behavior varies in terms of the individual's orientation to religion. Secular-oriented women do volunteer work for the Church, even though they may not even be nominal Orthodox Christians. Hence from the point of view of Orthodox Christianity and Philoptochos, the inclusion of nominal Orthodox Christians and non-believers into Philoptochos volunteer service is appropriate. The Philoptochos must remember that Orthodox Christians believe that talent, training and possessions are God's differential gifts to everyone which are then used in the service of the Church. Stewardship for the Orthodox Christian is not the private preserve of the Orthodox Church and her communicants.

Study No. 2: In a study of post-60 year old volunteers, female volunteers said they volunteered in order to help others and to fulfill some of their own needs. Male volunteers only gave altruistic reasons. These volunteers indicated, however, they would (or did) quit their volunteering when their needs were not met.

I believe that these attitudes are not confined to senior citizens. From the point of view of the Philoptochos, volunteers will leave its service when personal needs are not met. Therefore, attention should be given to learning what their volunteers seek so that an appropriate opportunity to serve will facilitate a volunteer's expectations. When the Philoptochos consistently puts forth their religious reasons for doing specific voluntary service, the religious education of the Philoptochos membership through positive reinforcement becomes practical.

Study No. 3: A significant study of 715 givers of time, talent and money to formal non-profit human services agencies was compared to 1,245 non-givers. The average age of the givers was 30. The givers were employed and had some college education. Givers were older than non-givers and had larger incomes than non-givers. Givers had positive attitudes toward the agency's fund raising effort and believed that volunteering was important. Givers had benefited from the agency and thought the agency was efficient at channeling funds to the needy.

When these results were compared with studies on effectiveness of non-profit agencies, important facts emerged that paralleled this study on givers of time, talent and money. These parallels were: (a) the agency's need to improve the efficiency of their operations; (b) the agency's need to focus activities on issues which community members consider beneficial to themselves and the community; (c) the agency's need to communicate the scope of its efforts to improve the community's knowledge on the progress of the agency which is being supported; (d) the agency's need to train and reward people for performing the required services; (e) positive attitudes toward the agency need to be encouraged. I believe that Philoptochos ought to utilize this set of empirical parallels. The achievement of mission and the effectiveness of projects are made possible through what volunteers know and do for Philoptochos.

Study No. 4: In a study of "stayers" and "leavers" among social service center volunteers, the following was found. There were four variables, viz., one organizational variable and three attitudinal variables. The organizational variable that differentiated "stayers" and "leavers" was "preparation for the task." The three attitudinal variables which also separated "stayers" and "leavers" were: (a) attitude toward task achievement; (b) relationships with other volunteers; (c) the volunteer work itself.

These four variables can be utilized profitably by the Philoptochos through diligent leadership, planning and supervision. Certainly, the training of the volunteer to do a particular task will assist in meaningful volunteer service. Also, the achieved task becomes a positive one when the volunteer sees it as beneficial to himself/herself as well as worthwhile for the Church and community. Hence the proper placement of the volunteer is important. The cultivation of healthy and friendly relationships within projects is important, though human frailties do intervene. Of course, the nature of the type of service performed affects each volunteer. And here too, correct placement is the key.

These four studies demonstrate that much can be done by Philoptochos leaders to recruit and keep their volunteers. I would like to add a few suggestions of my own. One of them is that the Philoptochos should take into consideration when recruiting whether the volunteer service is of a long-term type (e.g., officerships, Sunday school teachers) or short-term project type. The proper recruitment and training for both types of service are related to successful volunteers. Secondly, for both Philoptochos and the volunteer, it is certainly dysfunctional to wear out volunteers who so graciously fulfill their stewardship through Philoptochos. Therefore rotate volunteers and do not call on the same people for every task. Additionally, I underscore the importance of rewarding volunteers in public ways, though such reward is not intrinsic to Orthodox Christian stewardship. Nonetheless, it is a welcomed and gracious gesture to be acknowledged and thanked.

Part Four: Conclusion

The Orthodox Christian leader needs to integrate skills of leadership (e.g., Initiating structure in interaction; and, Consideration) with his/her

Orthodox Christian understanding of stewardship, e.g., the talent, training and possessions of a communicant are God's gifts which are used to further His work through the Church. Performing one's stewardship with love brings Christ into the lives of those affected by the steward. To assist the volunteer to fulfill his/her stewardship is a significant ministry of Philoptochos, one which may not be articulated in words but should certainly be accomplished in deeds!